



KARLA W. CORCORAN
INSPECTOR GENERAL

May 8, 2003

Robin Sproul
Vice President, Washington Bureau Chief
ABC News
1717 DeSales Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Sproul:

Your ABC World News Tonight report of May 5, 2003, regarding my office is factually incorrect and misleads your viewers. Your statement and references concerning teambuilding costs, OIG savings, relocation benefits, and the use of outside counsel are inaccurate, misleading, and unfounded. I must set the record straight.

You stated that we hosted a conference where I was suspended on a web of strings and employees built tents out of newspapers. You reported that I put the cost at \$615,000. This was the cost of the entire conference not the cost of teambuilding. The teambuilding cost in this case was \$32,000. We have had these conferences annually during my six-year tenure, which have included technical training, speakers from Congress and the Postal Service, as well as teambuilding exercises and employee recognition. This teambuilding activity, which was conducted by Outward Bound as one of their standard exercises used with Fortune 500 clients, comprised three hours out of the 24 hours of conference/training time. These are hardly unusual activities for any federal agency, semi-governmental entity, or corporation.

You stated that critics contend that half of our \$2.2 billion in savings was already planned by the Postal Service. I stand behind the figures my office reported. All monetary benefits disclosed in audits meet reporting standards established by the Inspector General community. In fact, the responsible Postal Service vice president agreed in writing with the \$962 million monetary benefit that we identified and which the Postal Service later disputed. It should be noted that one of our confused critics, who was interviewed for your report, regularly relies upon our findings and has used our reported savings in five different press releases to attack Postal Service management.

Your report also claimed that I paid my now Deputy Inspector General \$40,000 to relocate and that he was already working and living in the Washington, DC area. This is incorrect. Before the employee was selected for the position in the office, he worked in Washington, DC and lived north of Baltimore, Maryland, more than 50 miles away, using the train to commute to his 9 to 5 job. As part of his recruitment package, the Postal Service, not the Inspector General, granted a deviation to allow the employee to relocate to Washington to accommodate the long workdays and weekend work required to establish a new office in a short time frame. Without this accommodation, the employee would not have accepted the position. The propriety of this move has been previously reviewed by the Governors and briefed to numerous Congressional staff.

You contend documents indicate that between \$50,000 and \$150,000 was paid by my office to an outside law firm, supposedly for advice on audit standards, but that it also paid for help on personal matters, such as severance pay and issues with whistleblowers. This is inaccurate. All work performed by this outside law firm, totaling about \$75,000 over the last three to four years, was done for the benefit of the Office of Inspector General, not for me personally. Beyond establishing a seven-year term, the law was silent, and there was no legislative history. To assure that Inspectors General hired under this seven-year term limit would have safeguards comparable to safeguards in other inspector general offices, we sought the opinion of an independent law firm. The purpose of this was to obtain clarification through legislative changes or other means. About 10 hours was spent by the firm in determining whether it would be appropriate for an inspector general to discuss leaving before the end of their term, given the unique statute under which the Postal Service Inspector General is appointed. Further, the firm provided an independent analysis of whistleblower allegations. The review of personnel issues by an outside law firm was preferable to an internal review, which would be subject to criticism as self-serving.

I challenge you to have the courage to display and report this letter prominently to your viewers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karla W. Corcoran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karla" being more prominent.

Karla W. Corcoran